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ABSTRACT

The partnership of IBM, located in Research Triangle Park, North Carolina, and Meredith College, a small women's college, resulted in the Secretarial Transition Training Program. Hiring constraints had created critical shortages in the secretarial skill field. Additional impetus for the development of a transition training program was provided by IBM's full employment practices. When IBM identified surplus manufacturing and materials distribution employees, the corporation made these employees available for placement into other jobs, including entry-level secretarial positions. Two instructors from Meredith College were responsible for the major portion of the curriculum of the program, which was conducted on IBM premises for a period of 10 months. IBM internal business education instructors handled the presentations on IBM systems. The 25 employees who were selected were placed in the program full time and relieved of their previous work assignments. For the first three months students attended classes six hours per day. From the fourth month, program participants spent one week of each month in an internship assignment working with experienced secretaries. Meredith College provided a learning environment that would ease the transition from assembly line to professional office. Its flexibility and sensitivity to adult students also allowed the college to be responsive to the need for changes in the program. (Some program materials are appended.) (YLB)

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CORPORATIONS AND COLLEGES: DEVELOPING NEW POTENTIAL AND NEW PURPOSE

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CORPORATIONS AND COLLEGES: DEVELOPING NEW POTENTIAL AND NEW PURPOSE

> Corporate sector education has been called a "shadow" system and a "second" system, but such labels are both misleading and questionable. It is not a shadow and it is second to none in the integrity of its programs and purposes. The corporate system is educating many millions of adults in this nation. Its classrooms are more than the primary center for improving human resources to enhance productivity; they are a major center for adult education, a leading contributor to America's total learning opportunities.
>
> Nell Eurich*

Introduction

With that statement, Nell Eurich, in a recent study sponsored by The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, rebuffs the widely held view among academicians that corporations "train" while colleges "educate," thereby suggesting that learning for practical purposes is something less than learning for its own sake. Unfortunately, these elitist tendencies throughout the sixties and seventies, a period of great technological and social change, led thousands of young people to perceive higher education as totally irrelevant to their lives. Thus, they chose alternate pathways to adulthood. Today, the same attitudes are all too prevalent, limiting the effectiveness of many institutions, and even threatening the continued existence of others.

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*Eurich, Nell. Corporate classrooms. Princeton: University Press, 1985.

Colleges and universities are slow to adapt to change because their traditional role in society has been to preserve the past as well as create the future; to look back a well as forward; to develop perspective as well as vision. Yet, without a doubt, change has occurred in recent years, and it is substantial. The meaning of a liberal arts education is being rediscovered in a modern context. Career preparation is being interwoven into the undergraduate curriculum. The classroom is being enhanced by new technologies for teaching and learning. And most important, large numbers of older students returning to the campus have forced institutions to rethink what they do in terms of adult needs, adult responsibilities, and adult expectations. Perhaps no single factor has brought more change than that one. Continuing education, once an activity somewhat outside the mainstream of academic life, has suddenly become central to its future.

What makes all of this of interest here is that gradually, the educational focus of corporations and colleges has become more alike than different. The adult audience puts them on common ground and demonstrates new academic flexibility and purpose. Corporations are beginning to recognize that higher education has resources of great value for workplace education, and that using those resources may be more effective and efficient than creating their own. The result has been partnerships between corporations of all kinds, and higher education institutions equally varied, to develop and implement corporate learning opportunities.

This presentation then, is about one such partnership, the

program that resulted, and the learning outcomes for those it served. It is about new potential and new purpose not only for the participants, but for the providers as well. It is about teaching and learning, increased productivity, and the development of human resources. And ultimately, it is about corporate resolve, college mission, and the fulfillment of individual goals.

The Partnership

Clearly, a partnership between a corporate giant like IBM and a small women's college like Meredith seems quite unique, at least at the outset. Yet, given the location of this corporation and this college, as well as their particular characteristics and the nature of the proposal set forth, the match was really a logical outcome. Whatever was unique, then, lay more in the special qualities of each of these elements than in the partnership itself.

First, the location, Research Triangle Park, where IBM is the largest employer. The Park has turned the triangle-shaped area formed by Durham, Chapel Hill and Raleigh, into one of the fastest-growing regions in the country and is now the largest research center of its kind in the world. It is operated by a nonprofit foundation on behalf of the area's three major universities--Duke in Durham, the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, and North Carolina State University in Raleigh.* In addition to major corporations like IBM, Northern Telecom, and Burroughs Wellcome, the Research Triangle Park is home to many smaller companies, professional associations, and government-sponsored agencies, such as EPA and the National

*N.Y. Times, April 26, page 12F

Humanities Center.

While the three founding universities are the major reason for the Park's location, the many other educational resources in the area have also been an attraction. There are nine additional institutions located in the three counties included in the Triangle, and over a dozen more within a 50-mile radius. It is of particular interest to note that Meredith College, located on the west side of Raleigh at the intersection of U. S. 1 and Interstate 40, is closer to the Park than any of these, and is the most directly accessible.

Meredith College, founded in 1891, is a four-year liberal arts college for women with 1700 students and a strong interest in preparing its graduates for active roles in society. Faculty initiatives made continuing education an integral part of the College program over 15 years ago. Since that time, re-entry and certificate programs for women, and enrichment and professional programs for men and women, have earned a reputation for the institution as a special place for adult learners. This reputation has been greatly enhanced by a policy which has opened the campus and its facilities to community organizations for their use. As a result, more than 70,000 people come to Meredith each year for meetings and social events as well as College-sponsored programs and events. These visitors also know Meredith as a special place for adults. Thus, when older learners are the focus of a proposed program, Meredith College comes to mind as experienced and knowledgeable in this arena.

The IBM Corporation is the area's largest company, with almost 10,000 workers at the Research Triangle Park location

alone. These, together with 6000 at two other North Carolina sites, make North Carolina the third largest state in the number of IBM employees, after New York and California. IBM is well-known as a leader not only in industry but in corporate sponsored education. A competitive and volatile industry requires constant attention to the allocation and reallocation of human resources and thus, requires constant training and retraining. Furthermore, the Company's longstanding full employment practices mean that even when large numbers of jobs are eliminated, workers are not laid off. Instead, they are moved to other work or retrained for completely new careers. IBM has indeed made an ongoing commitment to educational programs that reach all levels of employees and often go beyond the more familiar short-term corporate efforts, as the program described here demonstrates.

IBM's request for a proposal to develop and implement a Secretarial Training Program was sent to three institutions, including Meredith College. There, it was reviewed by the Office of Continuing Education where it was immediately recognized as an opportunity appropriate to the expertise, resources, and mission of the College. Four specific aspects of the project made this evident: (1) a curriculum, much of which matched academic coursework offered by the College in its Department of Business and Economics; (2) the language arts segment, which would not be equivalent to academic coursework but would enrich and improve the candidates' possibilities; (3) the anticipated length of the program (10) months) which would allow for adequate coverage of the proposed curriculum; and (4) the nature and manageable size

of the participant group, which was described as including 25 long-term employees of unusual potential and motivation being moved from production-line jobs into preparation for new careers in the Company's administrative offices. More than anything else, it was this aspect that attracted Meredith College--the opportunity not only to develop skills but to develop people.

In responding, the Office of Continuing Education suggested the contact hours to be assigned to each course and how instructors to be provided would be expected to interact with the students. The proposal stated: "While classroom instruction will be the major responsibility, these faculty will also be scheduled to observe and advise students individually during the internship periods to help them integrate their learning experiences with job requirements."

In addition, Meredith offered a possibility that only higher education institutions with well-established procedures for re-entry students could make available: "Because we are an accredited four-year higher education institution, Meredith is also prepared to offer 12 hours of academic credit to all participants who are eligible for the College's re-entry option and who satisfactorily complete the total IBM program. Such credit would be directly applicable to most degree work and particularly to the baccalaureate degree in Business Administration."

The proposal concluded by citing the College's experience with adult students and continuing education as well as its reputation as an academic institution and community learning resource. But perhaps that was unnecessary--Meredith's

capabilities were already well known. Within two weeks, IBM had selected Meredith College to implement a "Secretarial Transition Training Program."

The Program

Long an area critical to the success of any business organization, the secretarial field is no exception at IBM. In recent years, as hiring constraints have created critical shortages in this and other skill areas, it has been necessary to find creative solutions for these problems. One such solution has been the development of a transition training program for secretarial and other skill needs designed to move people from one kind of work to another more in demand within the company.

As already noted, additional impetus for this approach has been provided by IBM's full employment practices. Through consistently careful resource management, IBM has not had a lay-off in almost 50 years. This record could not have been acomplished without major commitments on the part of both the business and its workers--commitment to change, commitment to learning, and commitment to mutual respect and loyalty between employer and employees.

As technologies and missions change within IBM to meet the communication needs of this decade and decades to come, human resources must be adapted to fulfill the new skill demands of the business. IBM's chairman of the board, John Akers, recently expressed this adaptation as "...helping move work to people and people to work..." This balancing is the essence of IBM's management of resources and a key to its success.

In developing new skills to meet business needs for today as

well as tomorrow, IBM creates career development opportunities and growth potential for those employees willing to be a part of these changes. Many a new career has been launched by employees willing to step forward and meet the challenges of change. By learning new skills, people equip themselves not only for participation in today's tasks, but position themselves for opportunities in the future as well.

Late in 1985, IBM identified surplus manufacturing and materials distribution employees at the Research Triangle Park facility. These employees were made available for placement into other jobs throughout the location. At the same time, there were some 25 openings for entry-level secretaries. Rather than bring in new employees, the decision was made to seek 25 candidates for secretarial training from the manufacturing and distribution surplus population.

After the need for the transition program was identified, the choice of an appropriate manager was critical to its successful implementation. The background of the manager selected included experience as a secretary; as manager of secretaries and administrative personnel in office systems; and as coordinator and instructor of secretarial training programs within IBM. All of this contributed to her ability to understand both individual and corporate needs and to monitor students as they progressed through the program.

The general skills necessary for secretarial work both within IBM and in other settings were reviewed. Included in the program design were typing, administrative procedures, business math, office systems, and the use of an internal secretarial data-entry

system. Communication skills, both verbal and written were identified as an area of highest importance.

The program was to be conducted on IBM premises for a period of 10 months. Two instructors from Meredith College would be responsible for the major portion of the curriculum, with IBM internal business education instructors handling the presentations on IBM systems. To ensure continuity, one Meredith College instructor would be named lead teacher and stay with the program throughout its duration.

Employees would be placed in the program full-time and thus, relieved of their previous work assignments. The schedule required six classroom hours a day for the first three months, with some classroom time allotted for study. Students were also expected to study on their own time. From the fourth month through the end of the program, the program participants would spend one week of each month in an internship assignment working with experienced secretaries. The internships were to place these students in various secretarial assignments within IBM that would allow them to use their new skills in an actual job environment.

The criteria for identifying candidates for the program included past performance, motivation for a career in the secretarial profession, and an aptitude for this kind of work. Priority consideration would be given to employees with previous secretarial-related training or experience or who had availed themselves of educational and personal development opportunites. Of strong interest would be those employees who were self starters; followed through on assignments and responsibilities;

had good attendance records; indicated the desire and commitment to successfully complete the training; and had been recommended by their managers.

A large number of candidates were submitted for consideration. Most had no previous work experience or training in secretarial skills. Rather, their past employment had been in assembly, moving of parts, driving fork-lift trucks, or other manufacturing and warehouse assignments. After thoroughly reviewing personnel files for the total group, the 75 best qualified candidates were selected for the next step. A team of two managers conducted interviews, with both interviewing each candidate individually. This process further assessed motivation and interest as well as the candidate's ability to express these in the interview setting. When these sessions were completed, assessments were carefully compared by the interviewing team and the final 25 candidates were selected to enter the program.

The IBM manager provided direct supervision of employees in the program while Meredith College was responsible for the program content and instruction. The manager also served as liasion with Meredith's continuing education dean who supervised Meredith personnel and the College involvement. Most of all, she worked closely with the instructors, on site, particularly the lead teacher, to maintain a thorough knowledge of the progress of each student in terms of both academic and personal growth.

For the first three months, instructors held weekly reviews with each student to discuss their grades and status in the program, interpersonal relationships, and internship assignments. All of these data were provided to the IBM transition program

manager as well, since students were also given the opportunity to discuss their progress with her. After this three-month period, the reviews were conducted monthly. These ongoing review and feedback sessions enabled both students and staff to understand strengths and weaknesses so that problem areas could be properly addressed and appropriate assistance provided.

The Secretarial Transition Program was a creative business solution used to solve a problem in human resources allocation at IBM. It is important to note that its development was the result of a basic tenet in the day-to-day operation of IBM's business--respect for the individual. Above all, the IBM Corporation undertakes as a fundamental responsibility to its employees, the opportunity to grow even in difficult times. The Secretarial Transition Training Program was such an opportunity.

The Learning Outcomes

For adult learners, reschooling or continuing one's education can be intimidating because of the chance for failure. This feeling was especially keen among those in the Secretarial Transition Training Program who, in fact, had more to risk than many other adults who return to the classroom. First of all, most of these women had worked together for a number of years in production jobs before venturing into this preparation for a totally new career. While they had each other's support, there was also competition as they struggled to succeed. Then, there was the matter of failure which, for these women, meant more than simply performing unsatisfactorily in the classroom. It also meant returning to jobs they had chosen to leave. Thus, their failure would be highly visible to co-workers and management.

These considerations increased each woman's apprehension and required great sensitivity on the part of Meredith College in choosing the faculty to be involved and in designing course instruction.

Selecting a college to develop and administer this training, rather than offering it in-house, was the key to obtaining a learning environment that would ease the transition from assembly line to professional office. The participants seemed to identify more with their classroom roles because they were viewed as "re-entry students" by the Office of Continuing Education at Meredith College and offered college credit for their efforts. From Meredith's standpoint this initiative was totally appropriate since these women met the same criteria as re-entry students on campus (high school graduates over age 23); because the coursework they would complete would be equivalent to beginning courses in the Business Department; and because those courses would be taught by Meredith faculty or persons approved by that faculty.

The same flexibility and sensitivity to adult students allowed Meredith College to be responsive to the need for changes and additions to the curiculum as the program progressed. The close relationship between the continuing education dean, IBM's manager of transition education, the lead instructor, and the students made this possible. Thus, the program was fine-tuned along the way as new needs were identified and additional resources required.

IBM's request for proposal provided a list of suggested courses of study and a timetable for course and program length.

The instructional needs of the program were divided between the areas of business education and language arts. The Office of Continuing Education at Meredith College contacted the Business and Economics Department to provide the skill training and office administration portions of instruction, and the English Department to provide the language arts studies. Later, the Department of Music and Performing Arts was involved, as a speech instructor was hired to develop oral communication skills.

Most of the students had no previous office experience and the few with some administrative background had been away from that exposure for years. These circumstances posed a unique challenge for the Meredith College staff. Meredith was not only asked to design a 10-month program of study but also to help create a new personal and professional image within this group to prepare them for a totally different career experience. Since there was a need to move from basic instruction to precise skills in a relatively short time, each course required a narrow focus and concentrated effort.

The classroom program was divided into three segments of three months each. The first of these offered six contact hours daily of beginning typing, office administrative procedures, and language arts. Basic skills were a necessary part of curriculum design in each of these courses, along with emphasis on professional image. The second three-month segment was made up of six contact hours daily of advanced typing, office administrative procedures, language arts, and business mathematics. The remaining three-month segment of the program covered six contact hours daily of word-processing, office system

laboratory practice, and written and oral communications. During each month of the last two segments of the course of study, the students were placed in on-the-job training for one-week intervals under the guidance of senior secretaries and their managers. One entire summer month of the program was devoted to on-the-job training without classroom instruction.

The objectives and methods of the beginning and advanced typing courses were to teach keyboard skills using correct techniques, basic letter and punctuation styles, proper correction of errors, and development of speed and accuracy. The curriculum design for these courses included the use of a textbook accompanied by a workbook. Early typing assignments provided drill for accuracy and speed building. After these were accomplished, correspondence and manuscript projects reinforced the importance of format in addition to speed and accuracy.

The administrative office procedures portion of the course continued throughout the program since it was the area which gave emphasis to professional image and office skills. The objectives of this course were to develop an understanding of the administrative environment of the office setting. Topics included the qualities of a professional secretary: the daily duties of an administrative secretary such as telephone, calendars, meetings, mail and filing; and standard business formats used by the professional secretary in performing routine as well as special tasks.

Curriculum design for this course included the use of a textbook accompanied by a workbook for reading assignments. Practical exercises were presented through the use of films,

video tapes, guest speakers, and demonstrations by the instructor and class members to reinforce topic areas. Students were also responsible for outside class projects assigned by the instructor to increase their awareness of the importance of professionalism in the secretarial field.

Business mathematics provided the students with an overview of basic mathematical skills used in the office setting. Practical exercises in the understanding of financial statements and budgeting were an integral part of this course.

The office system laboratory segment of the program gave students the opportunity to practice both personal and interpersonal skills. Using role play to stimulate practical office situations, students learned to deal with differences, working under pressure, setting priorities, and making decisions in an office environment.

Written and oral communication was perhaps the most significant part of the program because it was the most needed. Written communications emphasized general business writing skills, grammar usage, spelling, punctuation, proofreading, and vocabulary building. The oral communication segment focused on diction, pronunciation and voice projection. Emphasis was placed on building confidence and using assertiveness in verbalizing needs with management and peers. Again, role-play exercises were a useful way of learning along with case studies and tapes which allowed each student to assess her communication abilities. In addition, it should be mentioned that some study of literature was included early in the program as a way to tap the students' creativity and imagination. Journals were kept and included the

students' personal reflections, analyses, and perceptions of the programs and the opportunity it represented. Many were remarkable for their insight and expressive quality.

The instruction for this segment was provided using a team teaching approach. Because these students were generally weak in both written and oral communication, having two instructors in the classroom allowed for individual work and emphasized the interactive nature of these skills.

As the program concluded, it was apparent that oral communication, in particular, needed additional attention. Office skills without good communication would limit the effectiveness of these emerging secretaries in the office setting. Thus, this team-approach communication course was continued by IBM as a six-month followup after the conclusion of the major instructional program.

In looking back, enormous strides were made. While there is always more to be learned, these women developed an array of new skills along with the self-confidence to demonstrate them effectively in the administrative office environments at IBM, in which they were permanently placed.

. . . . . .

"Corporations and Colleges: Developing New Potential and New Purpose" can be summarized in a single word--"Empowerment," that which enables possibility, movement, choice. While empowerment is most often thought of in personal terms, in this case, an organization and an institution were affected as well as people.

For IBM, empowerment came in developing employees for more effective use within the Company. For Meredith College, it came in the opportunity to demonstrate its capabilities in a new setting and reach a different kind of student. And for those students, the 25 women who gave the Secretarial Transition Training Program their special commitment, it came in their sense of personal achievement, and in the discovery of new directions for their lives and work.

CORPORATIONS AND COLLEGES:

DEVELOPING NEW POTENTIAL

AND NEW PURPOSE

Secretarial
Transition
Training
Program

IBM

meredith college

SECRETARIAL TRAINING PROGRAM

CURRICULUM - con't.

Months 7 - 10 Classroom Instruction (3 wks monthly)
Internship (1 wk monthly)

Keyboard - Typing II

Business Writing

Office Systems Lab

8100 Secretarial System

OJT Internship

SECRETARIAL TRAINING PROGRAM

CURRICULUM

Months 1 - 3 Classroom Instruction

Keyboard - Typing I

Language Arts

Administrative Procedures - I

Months 4 - 6 Classroom Instruction (3 wks monthly)
Internship (1 wk monthly)

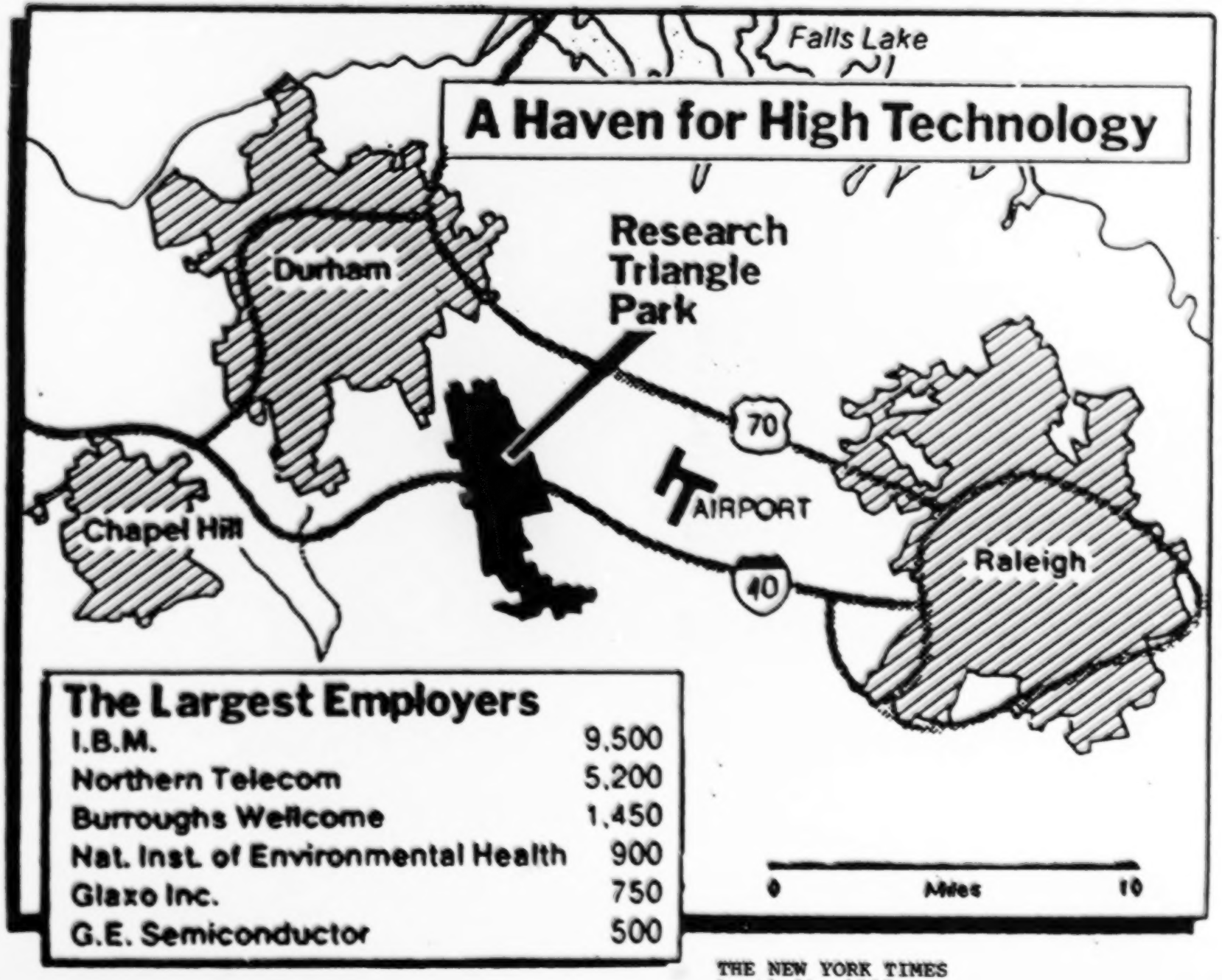
Keyboard - Typing I

Administrative Procedures - II

Business Communications

Business Math

OJT Internship (Rotational Work Assignments)



The Largest Employers

I.B.M.	9,500
Northern Telecom	5,200
Burroughs Wellcome	1,450
Nat. Inst. of Environmental Health	900
Glaxo Inc.	750
G.E. Semiconductor	500

THE NEW YORK TIMES
April 26, 1987

NORTH CAROLINA
Post-Secondary Institutions
1986 - 87

PUBLIC INSTITUTIONS

● University of North Carolina

1. Appalachian State University
2. East Carolina University
3. Elizabeth City State University
4. Fayetteville State University
5. North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State University
6. North Carolina Central University
7. North Carolina School of the Arts
8. North Carolina State University at Raleigh
9. Pembroke State University
10. University of North Carolina at Asheville
11. University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill
12. University of North Carolina at Charlotte
13. University of North Carolina at Greensboro
14. University of North Carolina at Wilmington
15. Western Carolina University
16. Winston-Salem State University

○ Community Colleges and Technical Institutes

17. Anson Technical College
18. Asheville-Buncombe Technical College
19. Beaufort County Community College
20. Bladen Technical College
21. Blue Ridge Technical College
22. Brunswick Technical College
23. Caldwell Community College and Technical Institute
24. Cape Fear Technical Institute
25. Carteret Technical College
26. Catawba Valley Technical College
27. Central Carolina Technical College
28. Central Piedmont Community College
29. Cleveland Technical College
30. Coastal Carolina Community College
31. College of the Albemarle
32. Craven Community College
33. Davidson County Community College
34. Durham Technical Community College
35. Edgecombe Technical College
36. Fayetteville Technical Institute
37. Forsyth Technical College
38. Gaston College
39. Guilford Technical Community College
40. Halifax Community College
41. Haywood Technical College
42. Isothermal Community College
43. James Sprunt Community College
44. Johnston Technical College
45. Lenoir Community College
46. Martin Community College
47. Mayland Technical College
48. McDowell Technical College
49. Mitchell Community College
50. Montgomery Technical College
51. Nash Technical College
52. Pamlico Technical College
53. Piedmont Technical College
54. Pitt Community College
55. Randolph Technical College
56. Richmond Technical College
57. Roanoke-Chowan Technical College
58. Robeson Technical College
59. Rockingham Community College
60. Rowan Technical College
61. Sampson Technical College
62. Sandhills Community College
63. Southeastern Community College
64. Southwestern Technical College
65. Stanly Technical College
66. Surry Community College
67. Technical College of Alamance
68. Tri-County Community College
69. Vance-Granville Community College
70. Wake Technical College
71. Wayne Community College
72. Western Piedmont Community College
73. Wilkes Community College
74. Wilson County Technical College

PRIVATE INSTITUTIONS

▲ Senior Colleges and Universities

75. Atlantic Christian College
76. Barber-Scotia College
77. Belmont Abbey College
78. Bennett College
79. Campbell University
80. Catawba College
81. Davidson College
82. Duke University
83. Elon College
84. Gardner-Webb College
85. Greensboro College
86. Guilford College
87. High Point College
88. Johnson C. Smith University
89. Lenoir-Rhyne College
90. Livingstone College
91. Mars Hill College
92. Meredith College
93. Methodist College
94. Montreat-Anderson College
95. Mount Olive College
96. North Carolina Wesleyan College
97. Pfeiffer College
98. Queens College
99. Sacred Heart College
100. St. Andrews Presbyterian College
101. St. Augustine's College
102. Salem College
103. Shaw University
104. Wake Forest University
105. Warren Wilson College
106. Wingate College

△ Junior Colleges

107. Brevard College
108. Chowan College
109. Lees-McRae College
110. Louisburg College
111. Peace
112. St. Mary's

■ Theological Seminary

113. Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary

□ Bible Colleges

114. East Coast Bible College
115. Heritage Bible College
116. John Wesley College
117. Piedmont Bible College
118. Roanoke Bible College

Legend:

● University of North Carolina	16
○ Public Community College or Technical Institute	58
▲ Private Senior College or University	31
△ Private Junior College	7
Subtotal	112
■ Theological Seminary	1
□ Bible College	5
Total	118

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SECRETARIAL TRANSITION
CANDIDATE CRITERIA

- past sustained performance
- strong desire for career in secretarial profession
- aptitude for secretarial work
- additional education
- personal development
- attendance
- self starters
- followed through on assignments/responsibilities
- indicated desire and commitment to successfully complete training
- management recommendations
- review of personnel file (included past job performance and education history)
- PRIORITY CONSIDERATION GIVEN FOR:
  secretarial related training or experience